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THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2015

On the Rise

Taxes set to go up \$30
Page 2

Moving forward

Port Colborne to hire deputy fire chief
Page 12

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Paying it forward



HANDOUT PHOTO
The Bell St. home of John and Zuzanna Miklosik has been donated to Habitat for Humanity by the couple's son John. The Miklosiks purchased the home after immigrating to Canada from Slovakia in 1938. See story page 3.

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UPFRONT

BUDGET

Port Colborne taxes set to go up \$30

MARYANNE FIRTH
Qull Agency Niagara

The average Port Colborne homeowner can expect to shell out about \$30 more this year on their combined property tax bill.

At its final budget meeting of the season Monday, city council approved in principle a city tax levy of \$14.3 million, representing a 3.68% city tax increase.

When assessment growth, a drop in education taxes (2.95%) and a slight regional increase are factored in, Port Colborne's net levy increase sits at 1.1% for the average home assessed at \$171,750, said Peter Senese, the city's director of community and corporate services.

That's assuming, however, there are no changes to Niagara Region's waste management rates, he added.

Included in the 2015 budget totalling \$22.35 million is:

■ \$950,000 for road resurfacing.

■ \$80,000 for improvements to Sugarloaf Harbour Marina, including dredging to help clear weeds and enhancements to the boat launch ramp.

■ \$152,000 for improvements to the Vale Health and Wellness Centre, including installation of additional dressing room seating, community room upgrades and changes to the building's air handling unit.

Also included is \$126,000 to cover the salary and benefits of a new deputy fire chief, a role council decided Monday night it wants to fill, and \$2,000 to reintroduce Flavours of Niagara to the community after a one-year hiatus.

The festival, put on hold in 2014 to undergo a rebranding, is scheduled to return June 27 and 28 at H.H. Knoll Lakeview Park.

The two-day event will include live music, tasting and sampling stations, craft brewers, food trucks, restaurants and wineries.

Flavours is working toward its Feast On designation through the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance, which acknowledges culinary events

A look at the 2015 Port Colborne budget

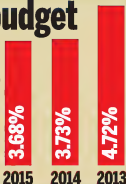
\$14.3 million

This is a 3.68% tax levy increase. Factoring in education and regional taxes, it's a 1.10% increase, or about \$30 a year.



Tax hikes shrinking?

The size of city tax hikes have decreased from 2013 to 2015:



Big ticket budget items:



\$152,000

for improvements to the Vale Health and Wellness Centre, including changes to the air handling unit and ductwork, added seating and renovations in the dressing rooms, and upgrades to the community room.



\$126,000

for the hiring of a new deputy fire chief



\$80,000

for improvements to Sugarloaf Harbour Marina, including dredging to assist with the weed problem, enhancements to the boat launch ramp and the purchase of equipment.



\$990,000

for road resurfacing

that offer at least 50% local fare.

In addition to the money provided by the city, a \$50,000 Celebrate Ontario grant has been sought that would allow

the festival to use interactive staging and infrastructure to showcase celebrity chefs and host cooking classes over the two days.

Staff should know whether

it will receive the grant by the end of the month, said events co-ordinator Allaina Kane.

If the funding does not come through, that component of the festival will not

take place.

While Port Colborne's budget was passed in principle Monday, it still needs to be ratified by council.

It is expected to come forward

at the April 13 meeting, which begins at 6:30 p.m. in council chambers.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ CONSTRUCTION: Brothers donate cherished family house to community builders

One house Habitat group won't have to build

MARYANNE FIRTH
DMI Agency Niagara

It was the family home John Miklosik grew up in.

The humble abode his parents first settled into after emigrating from Slovakia to Canada in 1938.

Now the two-storey Port Colborne dwelling will make the dreams of a new family come true, just as it did decades ago.

After moving into a retirement home in the lakeside city, Miklosik decided to take an unconventional route to see his childhood home again warmed by a family's touch.

Rather than being sold to the highest bidder, the Bell St. house was donated to Habitat for Humanity Niagara.

It was the first donation of its kind for the local organization, which usually builds homes with interest-free mortgages for families looking to get on their feet.

Familiar with the inspiring work done by Habitat locally, lawyer Chris Wilson made the recommendation that John and brother Stephen look at a possible donation.

"They really responded to the idea," said Wilson, who spoke on behalf of the Mik-

losik family.

"John didn't need to put the money in his pocket. He wanted to be generous, to give back."

In the 1950s, John Miklosik pursued a career behind the scenes in television. He worked for years as a technology assistant for CBC before retiring and returning to the Port Colborne home to care for his mother.

"He lives modestly, quietly," Wilson said, adding the man, who quite enjoys his privacy, "has always been generously minded."

Stephen is a retired anesthesiologist who now calls Columbus, Ohio, home.

The Miklosik brothers hoped to honour their parents, John and Zuzanna, with the donation.

"They're happy to know the house will be lived in by a deserving family," Wilson said.

He credited the men for their decision, adding this was the first time in his law career he was part of a home donation that did not occur posthumously.

This is not the first time, however, the Miklosiks have contributed to the community.



MARYANNE FIRTH
QMI AGENCY
NACARA

John Miklosik has donated his Bell St. home to Habitat for Humanity Niagara. The organization will be renovating the home for a family in need. The house is pictured on Friday, March 13, 2015, in Port Colborne, Ont.

In March 2014, Stephen and John donated \$28,000 to Port Colborne High School, which was used to purchase five smartboards and seven projectors, as well as small purchases including iPad Minis.

At the time, the pair, alumni of the Elgin St. school, humbly called it a "modest" donation. Though on a larger scale, the latest donation was done just as quietly.

Work on the home, believed to have been built in the 1920s, is expected to begin this fall.

While the structure has "strong bones," Habitat executive director Alastair Davis said the house will be renovated from top to bottom before the keys are handed over to the new owners, who have yet to be chosen.

"This is the first time we've been able to receive a donation of a home that we're able

to do a full renovation of," said Davis, who called the gesture "heartwarming."

"The house is fairly old, but it's structurally sound and the foundation is in good condition."

Davis said the home will be "totally gutted," with all electrical, plumbing and the heating system replaced.

It will get new windows, a new roof and have each room revamped. The garage on the

property will also be renovated.

Carpeting will be removed and the hope is to "bring back some of the natural charm" found in the original hardwood floors below, he said.

"It will be nice to have that charm and grace of an older home, but with modern upgrades."

While the project isn't set to begin until September, work is underway to find a family for the home and to identify local businesses willing to donate services or materials.

"We're hoping there are organizations that want to get involved," Davis said.

"We're looking for people to come forward as individuals and organizations to champion this project."

A Port Colborne steering committee will be created to help round up local people who can assist on the job using their trades skills or fundraising experience.

For more information, to get involved or to learn about eligibility requirements for the family to be chosen for the home, phone 905-685-7395 or visit www.habitatniagara.ca.

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[illegible]

■ QUEEN'S PARK

New funding for regional mental health programs



GRANT LAFLECHE / QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

MPP Jim Bradley makes his funding announcement Thursday.

GRANT LAFLECHE
QMI Agency Niagara

New funding from Queen's Park will allow Niagara's public health department to assemble a team to go into the community and help people with serious mental health issues.

The health department is using \$329,524 in provincial assistance, announced Thursday by St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley, to create a second assertive community treatment team.

The group of clinicians including nurses, social workers and a psychiatrist go into the community to help people who suffer from schizophrenia or bipolar disorder with psychotic tendencies.

"These are people who are on the far end of the mental health spectrum," said Krista Whittard, one of the managers of the department's mental health program.

"Often times these are people whose illness makes it difficult for them to go out and get help."

Until now, the department had one team of 10 people. At least one member of the team is out in the community helping patients every day with medical issues and advising them on day-to-day life issues.

The money — which is new base funding for the program that will continue indefinitely — will allow the department to hire

another 10 people for a second team.

Peggy Detlor, another mental health program manager at public health, said a second team will make the program more efficient.

The region will be divided in half, reducing travel and response time for both teams, she said.

The funding was one of three hatches of public money Bradley announced at regional headquarters in Thorold Thursday.

Another \$134,100 will go to the public health department, with \$34,277 to the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, to enhance and expand early psychosis intervention programs aimed at youths ages 17 to 24.

Detlor said the early intervention program is designed to help young people with mental health problems cope better and hopefully, not need the services of the community treatment team in the future.

Bradley also announced \$42,067 to be directed to the Canadian Mental Health Association's Niagara branch.

The money will be used to put a mental health worker on duty with a Niagara Regional Police officer in St. Catharines to respond to calls involving someone with a mental health issue.

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Shipwrecks — Brothers

SKIP GILLHAM
For QMI Agency Niagara

The cargo ship *Brothers* had been built for the Zim Israel Navigation Co. and completed at Stockholm, Sweden, in February 1960.

The 95.25-metre-long by 13.26-metre-wide vessel entered service under the flag of Israel as *Eltrog*.

Eleven years later, Zim Israel changed the ship's name to *Leora* but did not send the vessel to the Great Lakes under either name. Interestingly, later company ships sailing as *Eltrog* and as *Leora* did come through the St. Lawrence Seaway, but this one remained a saltwater trader.

It was sold to Stylo Cia Nav. in 1969 and registered in Panama as *Brothers*. The new owners sent the ship into the Great Lakes in 1972 but within a year it was resold and renamed *Sitia*.

Sitia did not last the year. It was on a voyage from Constanta, Romania, to Gaza with bagged cement when it was wrecked, while at anchor off Gaza, on Dec. 16, 1973.



Brothers is shown in the St. Lawrence Seaway on Oct. 7, 1972, from a photo by Capt. John Low.

PHOTO COURTESY KEN BEACHAMP

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■ **EXCELSIOR ON ERIE:** Eight-unit complex to open at 220 Erie St.

Affordable housing work starts

GREG FURMINGER
QMI Agency Niagara

Humberstone Shoe Park could have a few more youngsters kicking around after its new neighbours move in.

Ground has been broken for an eight-unit affordable housing project being erected by Niagara Peninsula Housing Corp.

The 21/2-storey building at 220 Erie St. at George St. will contain four two-bedroom and four three-bedroom units.

It will be called Excelsior on Erie.

"Jordan, my son, came up with it. It means great things," said Jeff Andrews, director of corporate affairs for the housing corporation.

Truth be told, the name reflects his son's love of Star Trek. Excelsior is the name of

a Federation Starfleet vessel.

The mission of the Niagara Falls-based corporation is to build housing developments that can be a catalyst for change in neighbourhoods in which they are built.

Its Erie St. project is valued at just under \$1 million, including the surplus city land abutting the Elm St. park. Andrews said was purchased for about \$65,000.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. is a partner with the housing corporation. Senior adviser Janet Sikiric said Excelsior on Erie qualified for and received a \$10,000 grant and a \$10,000 interest-free loan to help it get off the ground during the planning stages.

"We have others in the Niagara region that we've been asked to assist as well," she said.

Ward 3 Coun. Frank Danch,

who lives on Neff St. just steps from the construction site, welcomes the project for the people it will attract.

They will be able to use the park next door and will be just blocks away from businesses and restaurants.

Following discussions with the Ontario Municipal Board in wake of concerns expressed by Danch's neighbours, the housing corporation agreed that the building will not have windows that could be used to peer into their private property, nor will noisy air conditioners be exposed to the existing residents.

Parking has been moved to the back of the building, a change from early plans that was two years in the making.

"He's accommodated everyone, which I thought was pretty good," Ben Kenny, the ward's other councillor, said



GREG FUMINGER, QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Ground is broken on the eight-unit Excelsior on Erie affordable housing project by Niagara Peninsula Housing Corp. corporate affairs director Jeff Andrews, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. senior adviser Janet Sikiric, Ward 3 Coun. Ben Kenny, city planner Shannon Larocque and Ward 3 Coun. Frank Danch, on March 17 in Port Colborne.

of Andrews.

Overall for the neighbourhood, "it's a good fit," she said.

Kenny and Danch joined Andrews and Sikiric for a ceremonial sod-turning to begin construction Tuesday morn-

ing, as heavy machinery whirled behind them.

Classified as an affordable housing development — not to be confused with low-income or subsidized geared-to-income units — its units will be rented to families at a maximum of the 15th percentile of the CMHC-documented rental rates for Port Colborne.

People interested in the units can request floor plans, rental information and applications by e-mailing NPHC. inquire@hottmail.com.

Niagara Peninsula Housing Corp. is also working on plans for a 24-unit residence on Minto St., Excelsior on Minto.

Now at the site plan stage, that Port Colborne project will contain a mix of one- and two-bedroom suites.

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IN BRIEF

Arsenal seized in Fort Erie

An arrest warrant has been issued for a Fort Erie man after police seized four Tasers, two shotguns, a 9-mm assault rifle,

two pairs of brass knuckles and two switchblade knives during a drug trafficking probe that commenced mid-February. A warrant was issued after four weeks' investigation, Niagara Regional Police said in a news release Wednesday. Police also seized cocaine,

oxycodone pills, marijuana and a "large sum" of cash. Tom Forster is wanted on a warrant for numerous drugs and weapons offences.

NRP implements speech-recognition phone system

In a move said to improve public service, Niagara Regional Police has adopted an automatic speech-recognition telephone system for callers to non-emergency phone lines.

The Nuance system automates call routing, speech-activated dialing and provides access to self-service information. Speech recognition enables callers to reach departments and/or personnel by saying either the name of the department or the name of the person they wish to reach. Callers who are unable to self-direct their telephone call will continue to have the option of speaking with an operator for assistance.

The Nuance system is a powerful tool that will improve the quality of Niagara Regional Police Service telephone communications and interaction with members of the public.

The new feature became available at 10 a.m. Wednesday.

RC races at Welland mall

For the sixth year in a row, The National RC Races are being held at Seaway Mall's Centre Court all this week.

The radio-controlled cars are being raced by more than 200 competitors from across North America on a 209-square-metre circuit. Championship qualifying races in various stock and modified classes are on Saturday and the finals are

Sunday.

"This is a rapidly growing hobby and if you come out to watch, it's really spark some interest in getting involved," says Mark Fréchette, a St. Catharines RC Club member and event organizer.

Radio-controlled cars are self-powered motor cars that are controlled from a distance by a specialized transmitter or remote. Cars are powered by various sources that include electric motors and rechargeable batteries.

College student's beer among best

Cheers! Niagara College brewmaster student Nick Bobas is a third-place winner in the Great Ontario-Hopped Craft Beer Competition, hosted recently by the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention and held to promote Ontario grown hops.

Bobas, 34, partnered with Clear Valley Hops, a farm near Collingwood, for the competition, which was open to brewer-grower teams or breweries that grow hops. Competitors were challenged with creating a new recipe for a robust porter, following style guidelines for alcohol content, aroma and more.

"Since this is my first competition, I feel really good about placing third. Developing a recipe on a homebrew system, which had to follow given parameters, and applying it to a big 200-litre system at the Niagara College teaching brewery was a very valuable experience for me," said Bobas, who lives in Toronto.

Judging for the third annual competition took place in Niagara Falls on Feb. 18. An award ceremony is expected to be held in April 2015. For details about the competition visit <http://onhops.ca>.

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LOCAL NEWS

CRIME

Homicide victim found

ALISON LANGLEY
QMI Agency Niagara

Police have recovered the remains of Alex Fraser.

The 48-year-old Niagara Falls man vanished without a trace on Boxing Day when his burning car was discovered near the Niagara River in Port Erie.

Niagara Regional Police dive unit began searching the hydro canal near the Welland River in January, but had to put the search on hold in February due to bitter temperatures and icy conditions.

On Tuesday around 6 p.m. police recovered Fraser's body from the Sir Adam Beck Generating Station in Niagara Falls.

"We fully expected the body to end up in that area," said NRP Det. Staff Sgt. David Hunter.

Fraser, a father of two, grew up in Hamilton and had lived in Niagara Falls for a number of years.

Police continue to investigate and anyone with information on the matter can call 905-688-4111 or Crime Stoppers at 1-888-222-TIPS.

"We are always willing to accept any credible information with respect to the case," Hunter said.

Meanwhile, four people remain behind bars in connection with the case.

Charged with first-degree murder are Victoria Harvey, 20, Brad MacGarvie, 25, Thomas Nagy, 25, and Duran Wilson, 29, all of Niagara Falls.

All are expected to appear in court in April.

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SPECIAL 3PM MATINEE!

International Kenny Rogers Show Coming To Roselawn Theatre



Marty Edwards with Kenny Rogers (right)

Calling all Kenny Rogers fans! Don't miss the international touring show "Kenny Rogers and Friends" coming live to the Roselawn Theatre in Port Colborne for a special matinee performance on Sunday April 12 at 3pm. This incredible "All-Star" Country music show includes award-winning tributes to Kenny Rogers, Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton and "The Man In Black" Johnny Cash, backed by the fabulous Memphis Cats band.

Direct from Las Vegas, "Kenny Rogers and Friends" stars the amazing Marty Edwards as Kenny, widely regarded amongst the top tribute artists in the world. With other headlining appearances in Atlantic City, Australia, Europe, South America and North America, Marty has also appeared Oprah, CNN and the Jay Leno Tonight Show. In fact, Edwards is frequently mistaken for Kenny Rogers in his daily travels. Even Kenny himself was taken aback upon his

first meeting with Marty, and joked "Now don't go getting me into any trouble!"

Joining Edwards on stage will be the dazzling Wendy Engler as Dolly Parton and Reba McEntire, and the world's best Johnny Cash tribute artist, Jim Yorlido. Song highlights include "The Gambler" "Coward of the County" "Ring of Fire" "Working 9 to 5" "Why Haven't I Heard From You" "Lady" and as a special bonus, some incredible duets including "Islands in the Stream" amongst the many audience favorites.

Tickets to see "Kenny Rogers and Friends" at the Roselawn Theatre in Port Colborne on Sunday April 12th at 3:00pm are on sale now, value-priced at only \$30, available at the theatre box office, 296 Fielden Avenue Port Colborne or by phone # (905) 834-7572. Get your tickets early to ensure the best seats for this world-class Country music show!

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■ **HUMANE SOCIETY:** 10-month-old cat found injured outside LCBO store

Lost a leg, looking for a home

JOHN LAW
QMI Agency Niagara

She just wanted to get warm on a frigid February night. Instead, a 10-month-old Niagara Falls cat was left freezing, bleeding, and clinging to life in a shopping plaza parking lot.

When staff at the Oak-

wood Dr. LCBO store found the domestic long-haired cat they've nicknamed Tequila Rose, her left paw was a mangled mess. The Niagara Falls Humane Society was called, and she was brought to Heartland Animal Hospital the next day for surgery.

Not only was her left leg

amputated, she had a gash on her neck, an injury to her right leg, and cuts along her tail. The Humane Society figures she tried to find warmth under the hood of a car and got caught in the engine when it started.

"That's why we tell people in the winter to bang their hood once or twice," says staff member Nicole McKenzie. "It gives the cat a chance to be like, 'Hey, I should go.' They're just desperate for warmth and they'll go anywhere."

Featured on Wednesday's episode of *The Adoptables* on the Niagara Falls Review, St. Catharines Standard and Welland Tribune websites, Tequila Rose has plenty of supporters at the LCBO store

near where she was found. Staff have put out a donation box to pay for her upkeep, which has already raised more than \$500.

"They've been so excited," says McKenzie. "They called us (and said) 'It's full again.'"

"A 70-year-old woman walked in, gave them \$10 and said, 'Here, it's for Tequila.'"

"People have been very generous," adds Jen Wanless of the Humane Society. "Even if we raise her money, we'll use (the remainder) for the next animal."



NICOLE MCKENZIE/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Jen Wanless of the Niagara Falls Humane Society with a 10-month-old cat named Tequila Rose. They believe she was trying to get warm in a car engine when she was horribly injured three weeks ago. But after surgery to remove her left leg, she'll be ready to adopt in two weeks.

"she can be the queen," says McKenzie. She'll be ready to adopt in about two weeks, and Wanless expects a long list of people hoping to take her home.

"People are more sympathetic towards (injured animals), but it doesn't mean they come with perfect per-

sonalities, perfect behaviours. They all come with their quirks."

To adopt Tequila Rose or any animal at the Niagara Falls Humane Society, phone 905-356-4404 or visit www.nfhs.ca

john.law@summedia.ca

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CITY OF PORT COLBORNE PUBLIC NOTICE

CLOSING OF PART OF ORIGINAL ROAD ALLOWANCE BETWEEN LOTS 16 AND 17 CONCESSION 5

CLOSING OF PART OF ORIGINAL ROAD ALLOWANCE BETWEEN LOTS 24 AND 25 CONCESSION 4

Take Notice that the Council of the City of Port Colborne will hold a public meeting to consider a by-law to permanently close part of the original road allowance between Lots 16 and 17, Concession 5 and to permanently close part of the original road allowance between Lots 24 and 25, Concession 4. These road closes are for pieces of road allowance that were thought to have been stopped up and closed during the construction of the Welland Canal bypass.

Details of the Public Meeting:

Date: April 27, 2015
Time: 6:30 p.m.
Location: Council Chambers, 66 Charlotte Street, Port Colborne

- The portion of the unimproved and untraveled portion of the original road allowance between Lots 16 and 17, Concession 5, in the former geographic Township of Humberstone, now in the City of Port Colborne and municipally known as the unimproved and untraveled portion of Kleinsmith Road immediately south of the Township Tunnel lands and designated as Part 10 on the Reference Plan 59R-15312 dated March 18, 2015. The parcel is a landlocked parcel north of the road allowance closed by by-law 3412/143/196 and registered as Instrument Number R0719834 during the construction of the Welland Canal bypass.
- The portion of the unimproved and untraveled portion of the original road allowance between Lots 24 and 25, Concession 4, north of the road allowance between concessions 3 and 4 and south of the Welland Canal, in the former geographic Township of Humberstone, now in the City of Port Colborne, designated as Parts 1, 7 and 8 on the Reference Plan 59R-15310 dated March 18, 2015.

The Reference Plans illustrating the two road allowances are available for inspection (together with this notice) on the municipality's website www.portcolborne.ca and in the Clerk's Office.

Written and/or oral comments will be considered at the public meeting and can be forwarded to the undersigned. Written comments should be submitted by no later than Friday, April 17. Council will hear any person or their counsel, solicitor or agent who claims his/her land will be prejudicially affected by the proposed by-law and who applies to be heard at the meeting.

Additional information related to the road closing can be obtained by contacting the City Clerk at 905-835-2901 ext. 106.

Dated at Port Colborne this 19th day of March 2015.

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■ **CHARITY:** Paddler hopes to raise \$10,000 for cancer research

Kayaker launches cross-lake challenge

ALISON LANGLEY
QMI Agency Niagara

Growing up on the shores of

Lake Ontario in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Scott Robinson would often look across the horizon to

Toronto.

"I've been kayaking since I was nine-years-old and would kayak

every morning," the 18-year-old said.

It has always been a dream of mine to go across the lake to Toronto."

The McMaster University business student plans make his dream a reality this summer.

While it will be personal challenge for the Laura Secord Secondary School graduate, the 52-kilometre trek will also be in support of the Canadian Cancer Society.

Robinson hopes to raise \$10,000 for the nonprofit agency from his Kayak for the Cure Niagara.

He hopes to take to the water sometime between Aug. 12 and 16, depending on weather conditions.

"It's going to be pretty rough — those waves can reach eight feet — but I'm already training so I'll be ready by the time it comes."

He plans to leave from Queen's Royal Park in Niagara-on-the-Lake at sunset and end at the mouth of the Humber River in Toronto.

He expects his journey will take between 12 and 16 hours.

The project officially launches on Wednesday, at which time donations can be made online at www.KayakForTheCureNiagara.com. Robinson already has several successful fundraisers under his belt.

A benefit concert was held in December at a St. Catharines cafe and Robinson

KAYAK FOR THE CURE NIAGARA

- 52 kilometre journey from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Toronto
- expected to take close to 16 hours
- supports the Canadian Cancer Society
- www.kayakfortheCureNiagara.com

son and three friends went carolling in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Port Dalhousie shortly before Christmas and collected almost \$1,000 for the Canadian Cancer Society.

"When I first set the \$10,000 goal in October, I wasn't sure if I would be able to reach it, but now I think we're going to surpass it," he said.

Several fundraisers are planned for the coming months.

A charity concert, Concert for the Cure, will be held in May and a second concert is planned for July.

A group kayak is set for early August and the public can join Robinson for a 1.5-hour trip up the Niagara River.

He also plans to canvas door-to-door and approach businesses for support.

alison.langley@summedia.ca
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SUBMITTED PHOTO

Scott Robinson, 18, will kayak from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Toronto this summer to raise money for the Canadian Cancer Society.



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■ PORT COLBORNE-WAINFLEET CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Nominees announced for President's Awards

QMI Agency Niagara

Nominees for this year's President's Awards annually presented by Port Colborne-Wainfleet Chamber of Commerce have been announced.

And they'll find out next Wednesday whether they're among the night's big winners. The awards honour hard-

working citizens and the best in business from Port Colborne and Wainfleet.

The nominees in the following awards categories are:

- Junior youth citizen of the year: Aiden Speck, Brooke Bultz, Caitlyn Wade;
- Youth citizen of the

year: Austin Stastny, Brandee Videcak, Emily Fretz, Flora Sibley;

- Citizen of the year: Francis Ialo Chavert, Gail Todd, Gary Bellhouse
- Women in business

awards: Fay Defazio of Just Baked, Judith Boroniec of Talwood Manor, Lisa Maddalena of Lisa Maddalena ND, Tracy MacLeod of Business Express;

- New business of the

year: Bremfield's, Heavenly Chocolates, Lisa Maddalena ND, Market Café;

- Business of the year: Evolution Window Films, Lake Erie Property Maintenance, Market Café, Tal-

wood Manor Bed and Breakfast.

Tickets for the March 25 gala are available by calling the chamber office at 905-434-9765 or e-mailing katie@pcwcchamber.com.

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■ **BUDGET:** New position expected to cost the city upward of \$126,000 in salary and benefits

Port to hire deputy fire chief

MARVYNE FIRTH
QMI Agency Niagara

Port Colborne is getting a deputy fire chief.

A hot topic during budget deliberations, the contentious issue was finally settled Monday night when councillors agreed to fill the management position.

The decision, however, was far from unanimous.

A heated debate grew over the role that's anticipated to cost the city upward of \$126,000 for salary and benefits.

Funding for the position has been in the budget for several years after the department's public liaison role was left vacant. In past years, the money has been used to help cover the cost of sick-leave payouts for retirees.

The recommendation to hire a deputy fire chief came from the fire master planning committee, which has undertaken an extensive review of Port Colborne's fire services.

"When I'm looking at this, I put a lot of weight into that recommendation," said Ward 4 Coun. Ron Bodner, crediting the committee for the hard work that went into looking for improvements to the crucial city services.

The ever-increasing workload and stagnant staffing levels have hurt the department by impeding its fire prevention officer from properly fulfilling his duties, said Fire Chief Tom Cartwright.

The officer has instead been busy taking on other tasks

deemed mandatory by the province and necessary by city council, he said.

Between 2009 and 2014, fire prevention officer Mike Bendis spent an average of 281 hours per year on work outside the realm of fire prevention and education, he said.

The hiring of a deputy chief is expected to relieve that burden and save the city at least \$20,000 in overtime costs and acting chief's pay, Cartwright added.

Without hiring a deputy, that burden will only continue to grow, said Ward 4 Coun. Barbara Butters, who sits on the fire master planning committee.

"You only have so many bodies there. You only have so many resources there," she said.

"If you have a workload that continues to grow but the numbers stay the same, at some point some staff is either not going to get done or people are going to be wearing hats that are not appropriate to that work environment."

Ward 1 Coun. Dave Elliott believed the \$126,000 a year would be better spent on other costs faced by the city, including infrastructure work, community improvements, servicing the east-side employment lands and helping pay for the new multi-million-dollar operations centre that is in Port Colborne's future.

"I have not heard from one single resident that wants us to do this," he said of filling the management position.

"They all say, 'We don't want it. We don't need it.'"

"You want to spend \$126,000 on a position, and I haven't heard one single word about what we need to do to reduce the workload. Instead, it's let's spend because the fire department is overworked."

Visibly frustrated, Elliott said council should review the provincially mandated and council-directed services to determine where the workload can be minimized.

"We've been at this for four or five weeks now. You had the core services

and the mandated services in front of you," Bodner said in response to Elliott.

"You could've come to the table and said you want to cut 10 of the services council added. Easy as that. The opportunity was there to do that."

Butters said the committee went over the department's services "with a fine-toothed comb" looking for inefficiencies or duties that could be removed.

"We went through every imaginable thing on the list one by one," she said.

"I could not envision the public being happy with even one of those things cut, because they've come to rely on them."

Butters told Elliott if he wished to defer the topic another week to go over the services again, "by all means."

"I don't know what you want to unplug. I'm quite convinced there's nothing to be unplugged. But if you can say to me, 'We don't need this block of stuff' and there are savings to be found there, then have at it."

The motion to hire the deputy chief was approved by Bodner, Butters, Ward 2 councillors Angie Desmarais and Yvon Doucet, and Ward 3 Coun. Ben Kenny. It was opposed by Elliott, Ward 1 Coun. John Mayne and Ward 3 Coun. Frank Danch.

While the recommendation, as well as the budget itself, was approved Monday, it will need to be ratified at the next gathering of council.

marvayne.firth@summedia.ca
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■ **CRIME:** Suspects often speak in person's native language

Fraudsters targeting south Asian community

TONY RICCIOTTO
QMI Agency Niagara

Police are reminding residents, especially in the south Asian community, to be wary of phone marketers offering better deals.

Niagara Regional Police are asking people not to be so trusting if they receive a telephone call from someone who claims they

will be able to get them a better deal on their utility bill.

It's a telemarketing fraud, and it will end up costing them money, police warn.

"They are targeting people of south Asian descent and when they answer the phone they speak in Punjabi, so right away they establish that trust or bond," said NRP Det. Const. Habib

Rangl, a member of the Central Fraud Unit.

"They will ask you to send your utility bill to them and they promise that 50% of your bill will be paid by them. They justify it by saying they will pay the bill with coupons and so forth and that's how they sell it," said Rangl. "They ask that you send them the full payment and then they will

reimburse you the money."

The unknown suspects will also ask for banking and personal information from the victim.

For example, Rangl said if someone's bill is for \$1,000, they will ask for the full amount. When the victim receives their next bill, it will show that half of that amount has been paid, but what happens is that the bill was paid using fraudulent credit cards.

"Initially when people see that the payment has been made they think it's great," said Rangl. "By

the time the transaction has been processed and it goes through the banking system, that payment gets reversed and you get a bill from the hydro company letting you know that payment did not go through."

The victim is left with an unpaid utility bill and has lost the money that was sent to the suspect company.

Police say residents should be diligent when dealing with unsolicited phone calls or e-mails, and not to be pressured into any deal or contract.

"These guys are professionals. That's their job and they practice it 24/7, so they become good at it, just like anyone else who is trained at doing their job," said Rangl.

Police plan to meet with a number of community groups to make sure they are aware of this latest scam so they don't become victims. In addition, anyone who has elderly or vulnerable relatives or friends who live on their own, should spend a little time discussing these risks so they can avoid losing any money.

IN BRIEF

Torchbearers headed to Niagara

Olympian Simon Whitfield joins a Canadian forces veteran and a police officer in being named the first torchbearers to carry the flame in the

Toronto 2015 Pan Am Games torch relay.

The Pan Am/Parapan Am Games organizing committee on Monday announced the first 10 torchbearers, and unveiled the torch and torchbearer uniform.

The relay, which will feature 3,000 torchbearers, will begin May 30 and end on July 10.

The relay is expected to come to Niagara June 20. The names of the Niagara torchbearers are expected to be announced March 23.

The torch will be carried by more than 60 models of transportation and exceed 5,000 kilometres on the road and 15,000 kilometres by air.



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■ ANIMALS



KAREN WALTER/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

Minnie is seen here 16 pounds heavier with Dr. Lisa Hutchison of Huntington Animal Hospital.

Charges laid against couple in case of emaciated dog

QMI Agency Niagara

Charges have been laid against a St. Catharines couple in the case of an emaciated dog found earlier this month.

The Lincoln County Humane Society said Friday it has laid four charges each against a 23-year-old woman and a 26-year-old man.

The charges, under the Ontario Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, include permitting an animal to be in distress, failing to provide adequate and appropriate medical attention and failing to provide adequate and appropriate food.

The couple, whose names were not released by the humane society in line

with SPCA policy, will appear in provincial offences court in St. Catharines on May 19.

The French mastiff was 42.9 pounds — about half a normal weight — when she was picked up running at large near Niagara and Scott streets on March 4. She had recently nursed puppies.

The humane society tracked down the owner the next day after tips poured in from the public on social media.

Minnie had escaped from a yard near the area where she was found. The owner surrendered her to the humane society.

The humane society said Minnie is now in foster care, doing well and continuing to gain weight. She was 58.96 pounds by Friday.

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■ **ECONOMY:** Gasoline costs hover near \$1 mark

High prices at pumps costing jobs: Gates

TONY RICCIATO
QMI Agency Niagara

The price of gas at the pumps is still too high and it needs to come down, says Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates.

While some local residents agree with him, others appear to be content that gas prices have remained relatively close to the dollar-a-

litre mark.

"I'm good with it the way it is right now and if it stays around a dollar," said Jason Osborne, who drives a smaller vehicle that is quite economical on gas. "I have no complaint, I'm happy with it."

Gates, a member of the NDP, has called on the Liberal government to level the

playing field by putting a stop to what he calls price gouging at the pumps.

He said that while the price of oil has dropped to less than \$50 a barrel, like it was during the winter months when Niagara residents were paying about 85 cents a litre, drivers in the region are paying more than \$1 a litre.

Gates said drivers

shouldn't have to go to neighbouring communities to find a gas station with prices they can afford.

"The high price of energy in Niagara is costing us much needed jobs. Companies are moving across the border where they can get cheaper gasoline and energy prices," said Gates, adding the first thing the Liberals should do

is "beef up the powers of the Ontario Energy Board to take a hard look at gas prices in order to reduce price unpredictability and unfair pricing."

Barb Wilson said she can't figure out how gas prices can go from 85 cents to more than \$1 a litre without any explanation, while oil prices remain low.

"I just don't understand it. The only good thing about paying \$1 is that it could be a lot worse and we could be paying \$2," said Wilson.

According to gasbuddy.com, the listed price of gas in the Niagara, Hamilton and Toronto areas on Wednesday was about \$1.018 a litre.

On the average, that was about 25.8 cents less than what motorists were paying last year at this time when it cost \$1.276 a litre.

Gasbuddy.com is a website that keeps track of gas prices across Canada and the United States, and also helps motorists find cheap gas prices in their area.

Patrick DeHaan, a senior petroleum analyst with the

NIAGARA GAS PRICES

Retail milestone for regular gas going back to 2008

Date	Price (in cents)
Highest Recorded Average	
09/15/08	142.4
Lowest Average on This Day	03/18/09 87.5
Highest Average This Year	03/04/15 107.7

website, said the market for gasoline is more competitive on the American side because they have more refineries so there is more competition and prices stay lower.

However, in border towns such as Niagara Falls, gas stations on the American side can actually keep their prices just a bit higher than other areas because they know Canadians will be crossing the border to buy their gas.

"In recent weeks, some of the larger companies have padded their margins, which means they have been increasing their profit margin on gasoline a bit," said DeHaan. "Now we will have to see if that remains the case or if stations suddenly become more competitive. That's where we are for the time being."



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Pick-and-pay cable won't be painless

JOHN LAW
QM Agency Niagara

"Give us choice!" you asked. You got it, says the CRITC. "Give us pick-and-pay with our cable!" the masses demanded. Coming right up, says the CRITC. "But please, don't raise our cable bills and screw us over like you always do" we added.

crickets Come on, you didn't think Thursday's announcement of more choice with your cable channels didn't come with some fine print, did you? When it comes to the CRITC, good news is always followed with a "but..."

In this case, you'll get to pick your own cable channels at some point next year. But... it could cost more money. And some small channels you like might disappear. And some Canadian broadcasting jobs could be lost.

Man, can't we savour this victory without getting burned out?

But that's the thing — what we see as a victory is hollow at best. We "win" something that should have happened several years ago. Forcing people to pay for channels you don't want in order to watch the ones you do is such an archaic, insulting concept, the CRITC had no choice but to finally buckle.

It doesn't matter that many of the channels no one's watching are Canadian. They can keep expecting fed-up cable customers to support a product they don't care about. It's hard enough getting them to pay for the stuff they actually watch — why am I paying for a dozen or so French stations? Or a station with Italian variety shows? Or a Seattle station showing reruns of *How I Met Your Mother*?

They are never, EVER watched on my TV. So why are they there? If I had to break it down, I probably don't watch 80% of the stuff in my cable package.

I don't come home with groceries knowing I'll only eat 20% of them. I don't pay to watch a movie and leave after 20 minutes. The most appalling part of our cable TV arrangement is just how long we've tolerated it.

And by "we," I mean the folks who haven't cut the cord yet. A group getting smaller each day. Call it stubbornness, laziness, guilt, whatever... I still believe in paying for the stuff I enjoy. I still want to support the shows I watch. They aren't free to make, they shouldn't be free to consume.

I would be a terrible pirate.
But our prehistoric cable packages

have sent otherwise honest folk to the dark side, and I can't blame them. Cord-cutters were the big topic of discussion at the CRITC's Let's Talk TV discussion in Quebec last fall. The solution? A "skinny basic" package capped at \$25 per month that will include local and regional content. Beyond that, customers can pick and choose individual stations on a monthly basis.

Here's the catch, though. If you expect The Movie Network during Game of Thrones time to cost the same as Teletoon Retro, please take a selfie when you open your cable bill.

Choice comes with a cost. It's like the hydro company urging you to conserve energy... so they can raise their rates to make up for lost revenue. For years, the CRITC has given smaller channels a fighting chance by making them part of the package with the big stations. Without that safety net, many of them will vanish.

Does it matter? Should we care? Advocacy group Friends of Canadian Broadcasting thinks so.

"The decision is irresponsible," spokesman Ian Morrison said Thursday. "The move to unbundle cable channels and introduce a mandatory basic TV service represents a body blow to Canadian content on TV and will leave consumers expecting a price break disappointed."

He said the CRITC is "rolling the dice" on an industry that generates more than \$15 billion in revenue and 66,000 jobs.

But what's the flipside? Continually ignoring what customers want? They've spoken, with every illegal download. Every black market cable box. Every cord they cut.

Friday's decision might already be too late for the cable industry — as with music, once people get a taste for free, it doesn't matter what you charge. They won't pay it.

Customers have made it clear: They will not prop up niche channels just because they're Canadian. If no one's watching it doesn't matter who makes them.

A day after the announcement, I got an e-mail from a Canadian company making a new series called *Tail Ship Odyssey* for the Discovery Channel. The website for? They're sending a survey inviting viewers to "have their say about potential new TV series."

In other words, they want to know if you care before they bother making it.

Welcome to the new cable landscape, where pick-and-pay means less risk and innovation than ever.

john.law@summedia.ca



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■ **COURT:** Man charged with first-degree murder believed to be victim's former partner

Arrest made in Scanlon killing

ROB HOULE

QMI Agency Niagara

While police remain tight-

lipped about the relationship between a murder victim and the man accused of killing her, a man

bearing the same first name was listed as her partner in an obituary in 2013.

Jeremy Edward Gough of St. Catharines was arrested and charged with first-degree murder Monday night.

He appeared briefly in bail court Tuesday morning, where he was remanded into custody and will return to bail court via video link at the St. Catharines court-house Tuesday.

Gough, a heavy-set man approximately 5-foot-10 with a close-cropped haircut, stood stoically in the prisoners' box as his lawyer, Bobbie Walker, asked for and was granted a publication ban.

Gough, who was wearing a white T-shirt, faces a first-degree murder charge in the death of Jessica Scanlon, 29, a mother of two children who was found dead in her Chetwood St. home in St. Catharines Feb. 23.

An autopsy the following day confirmed her death as a homicide.

Niagara Regional Police have not released the cause of death.

In a news release announcing Gough's arrest, investigators would only say the victim and accused were known to each other, but that no further information would be released.

A person named Jeremy was listed as Scanlon's partner in an obituary that ran on the St. Catharines Standard's website following her mother's death in March 2013. There is no mention of a partner in an online obituary for Scanlon on Feb. 28.

A crowd-funding effort started by a family friend, Carrie Dungavel of St. Catharines, had raised \$14,661 by late Tuesday afternoon to pay funeral costs and create a trust fund for Scanlon's two children.



FACEBOOK PHOTO
JEREMY GOUGH

In a note on the web page (www.gofundme.com/n505ew), Dungavel said she will keep the campaign running for as long as people continue to donate. The note, posted March 5, the day of Scanlon's funeral, reads: "The family is

extremely thankful for all of your donations, thoughts and prayers. I have heard from a number of people, the Scanlon family and close friends of the family, that the generosity of people; family, friends, and complete strangers, has helped them see light, and that people are still good, in an otherwise very dark time in their lives."

Wes Reimer was among the 309 people who had donated as of Tuesday afternoon.

"Such tragedies are hard to understand. But the care and sharing they evoke is easy and beautiful. My/our prayers are with the kids and family as well," he wrote on the Go Fund Me website.

The NRP did not reply to phone and e-mail messages requesting further information.



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■ **BUDGET:** Money will be set aside in infrastructure reserve

Wainfleet taxes will climb by nearly 2%

ALLAN BENNER
QMI Agency Niagara

Wainfleet residents will pay an extra \$25 in township taxes this year. In part, to help pay for projects in coming years.

Township council unanimously approved a 1.82% tax increase Tuesday night, meaning the owner of an average non-lakefront Wainfleet home valued at \$241,338 will pay \$25.11 more this year, said treasurer Robyn Madere.

She said the municipality's total levy is \$4.76 million, excluding regional and provincial property taxes.

Mayor April Jeffs said it's the lowest local tax increase she's seen since becoming Wainfleet's mayor in 2010, but the township still managed to add a 2% levy to address future infrastructure needs.

"I feel good about it," she said.

The township also manages to pay for several infrastructure projects this year, including adding new road and chip pavement on Deeks and O'Reilly's Rd., while providing maintenance work for other roads.

Jeffs said residents of O'Reilly's Rd. walked through the entire last term of council to get the road paved, and "we felt this year we could resurface that road and Deeks Rd."

If the 2% infrastructure levy is continued in subsequent years, "in 10 years there will be \$7 million (in our reserve fund)," she said.

That should be enough to pay for expensive projects, such as arena upgrades and a new \$1-million bridge on Gents Rd., a project that was denied funding by the federal government.

"This money will over time accumulate and then will be earmarked for those kinds of infrastructure projects," she said.

Jeffs said the timing was right to add the infrastructure funding, "because we had a budget that we pretty much got everything we wanted, with a pretty minimal increase."

"I think it was prudent of us to seize this opportunity," she said. "I'm pleased, because I was thinking we'd be just under 3% when we first took a look at it."

Despite keeping the tax increase to a minimum, "we managed to do this kind of aggressive thing with the infrastructure levy," Jeffs said.

"When you can start something rolling that will accumulate for the future, you feel good about it."

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■ **POLICE:** McGuire says 'no one takes great pleasure' in pulling over speeding drivers

Chief busts ticket quota myth

BILL SAWCHUK
QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara's police chief is reassuring drivers his officers aren't out there to serve and collect.

Welland Tribune readers wanted to know if the Niagara Regional Police have a quota system for handing out traffic tickets. Statistics show the NRP wrote 43,330 of them last year.

Tickets are an important part of traffic enforcement and safety — but no, there isn't a quota, Chief Jeff McGuire said during this month's Chat With the Chief webcast Thursday on wellandtribune.ca.

"It is not a fun part of policing," he said.

"Nobody takes great pleasure in pulling someone over and giving them \$300 worth of tickets, but it is an expectation of our officers and a part of policing.

"I wouldn't tolerate a uniformed police officer who patrolled in St. Catharines for a year and hadn't arrested anyone. It doesn't make sense. I wouldn't be happy if I had a police officer out in Fort Erie who has never written a report.

"Traffic safety is a core responsibility of every single uniformed police officer."

McGuire said revenue from traffic tickets is collected by the



JULIE JOSSAN/QMI AGENCY NIAGARA

QMI Agency Niagara reporter Bill Sawchuk and St. Catharines Standard managing editor Erica Bajaj speak with Niagara Regional Police Chief Jeff McGuire, in this file photo. On Thursday, McGuire rejected the idea that officers must meet a quota for issuing traffic tickets.

Provincial Offences Court and flows back to the local government.

The police service doesn't

pocket the money.

"If that were the case, you could go to your officers and say, 'Look, budget times are

tight, we are going to have to write a thousand tickets each this month because we are getting \$1 apiece,' but that is not

the way it works."

Chat with the Chiefs a webcast on stcatharinesstandard.ca conducted monthly.

Questions and comments can be submitted on Twitter using hashtag #AskMcGuire.

McGuire said he keeps a ticket book handy, though he admits having the chief of police tied up in traffic court might not be the best use of executive resources.

"I have a book of tickets in my car at the ready," he said. "I haven't written a traffic ticket since I have been in Niagara, but this can be fair warning... the next person that is talking on the phone [in a car] beside me could be my first."

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